Masking

By People's CDC / September 12, 2022

High-quality, well-fitting masks can protect you and others!

How does COVID spread?

Tiny infectious particles of virus- called aerosols– are produced by an infected person from talking, laughing, singing, or just breathing. They can spread through any room or closed space, such as an office, school, bus, train, store, or theater. They can stay in the air and remain infectious for many hours. When an infected person sneezes or coughs, they may produce much larger droplets which fall to the floor within minutes.

Why do I need a mask?

Masks protect you from catching COVID because they can stop aerosols as well as larger droplets.

Masks also protect others, which can be important whether you have COVID symptoms or if you happen to be one of the 40% of people infected with COVID who have no symptoms.

How do I find the right style for me?

The best mask is one that fits snugly against your face and is comfortable. Masks come in different shapes and sizes. You'll find 'cup' style masks, 'duckbill' masks and 'flat-fold' masks. Start with ordering masks in small quantities and try different styles to find the best one for your face

Does how I wear a mask matter?

Yes, wearing a mask under your nose provides **no** protection. A high-quality mask with only one strap around your head provides less protection than both straps worn correctly.

Follow the instructions that come with your mask to be as protected as possible.

Which masks are the best?

Choose masks that are high quality and well-fitting

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- **Good:** Double Masking, cloth over surgical
  - When a cloth mask improves the fit of a surgical mask, then double masking adds more protection than just a surgical mask.
- **Better than no mask:** Surgical Mask
  - Quality filter material, but not well fitting. Offer much better protection than not wearing a mask at all! For some people, surgical masks can be made more form-fitting by knotting the ear loops where they attach to the mask, then folding and tucking the extra material under the edges.
- **Better than no mask:** Cloth Mask
  - Cloth masks alone are **not** effective against aerosols and the new variants

How do I know my mask is reliable (not fake)?

There are a lot of fake (counterfeit) masks on the market. As many as 60% of KN95s may be fake. These masks may have inferior material or straps in the wrong place. Here are some tips on avoiding fake masks:

- **N95s:** Nearly all N95s (also called respirators) have head straps. If you see one that has earloops, it is likely fake. N95s are NIOSH approved (unlike KN95s and KF94s). they must have Testing and Certification approval number (e.g. TC 84A-XXXX) printed on the mask. They will also have a part number, N95, NIOSH, and a lot number.
- **KN95s:** If these masks meet Chinese standards they will include the name, trademark, or other maker (manufacturer) or supplier identification. They will also have the model or size and the number and year of publication of the Chinese respiratory protection standard combined with a filter classification such as GB 2626-2918 KN95.
- **Kf94:** These masks are made and closely regulated in Korea, but sometimes fakes are made in China. The masks won't have text, but the package should say "Made in Korea" and should include the product name, maker name, and distributor name. Each separated mask should be packaged in a flat, glossy wrapper with a textured border. The wrapper will have expiration date and a lot number printed on it. The package may be in Korean but many companies now have English packaging. Importers like Be Healthy or KMact carry reliable masks. Once you learn the names of a few KF94 makers, you can try to find their websites to learn where they are sold.

What about reusing a mask?

You can reuse a mask for many hours before discarding it. But, if the mask is visibly stained, spoiled or the straps are loose then toss it. You shouldn't wash them. Washing will damage the filter materia

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Anything else I should know?

Avoid masks with an exhalation valve. The valve allows your unfiltered breath to be exhaled into the air around you.

Find free masks here

For more information check out the Mask Up pdf found below as well as other information on fighting COVID-19 throughout our website!

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